

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

☆ FEB 11 1937

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, February 11, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "SELLING REST TO TOURIST GUESTS." An interview with Florence L. Hall, Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Listeners, I'm going to turn the meeting over today to Florence L. Hall, of the Extension Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Some of her recent official trips have taken her to the northeastern group of States, particularly to Vermont, Maine, and West Virginia. These are all States noted for their scenic attractions in summer-time, and Miss Hall has attended several winter conferences of extension workers and rural homemakers who are interested in making summer profits through taking overnight guests. She has a good many ideas of her own and has collected some criticisms of tourist places which may prove helpful to those of you who are thinking of opening up your homes. And some of you may be prospective travelers interested in knowing what you have a right to expect.

Quoting Miss Hall: "We extension workers think that taking tourists is a good home industry for a rural family that desires to add to the income, if the home is provided with facilities for accommodating over-night guests and is well situated. That is, so that a reasonably steady patronage can be expected. Of course a house on a heavily traveled pike has a better chance to be noticed than one on a country lane. But for the very reason that passing traffic is noisy, many people look for signs telling them where they can be accommodated a short distance away from the main highway on a quiet side road.

"If you realize that rest is the principle commodity you have to sell, and prepare accordingly, you are pretty sure to succeed. It's a good rule to spend at least one night yourself, before the season opens, in every room you propose to rent. Check on its conveniences or lack of them. Sleep in the bed. Make sure the furniture is placed in the best possible way for the traveler arriving with bags.

"Put the accent on spotless cleanliness in every detail of the house, not only at the beginning of the season when everything is newly painted and the curtains and household linen freshly laundered. Keep up the standard of cleanliness throughout the summer, even if it cuts into profits to hire some help at the height of the season.

"Travelers are more interested in the bed-rooms than in any other part of the house. The living-room where they are received and registered should have a welcoming look and the dining-room should be cheerful and attractive.

"Discriminating tourists expect a good bed, with a comfortable, springy mattress on strong springs that do not sag. They may want an extra blanket.

"Complaints about the lighting in tourist bed-rooms are frequent. Some travelers do not sleep well under strange roofs, and like to read awhile. Others want to write a letter or add to their travel diaries. Nearly everybody wishes to study road maps, and most women wish good lighting at the dressing-table. Have at least a bedside light and a light near the mirror. If possible, place a floor lamp by the easy chair, which can also be moved near the writing table. By all means furnish some place to write comfortably.

"It may be a new idea in a rural home to have so many different lights in one room, but city people are used to them. And now that rural electrification is becoming a reality in so many places, more lights will be possible in farm homes, too.

"A great many tourists complain of lack of a suit-case rack. An ordinary folding camp stool will do, or a home-made frame, stained to go with the furniture. If you provide a rack, suit-cases won't be put on the bed-spread or chairs. A towel rack will prevent the guests from leaving wet towels on the backs of nice chairs for lack of better place to hang them. And do provide a face cloth with the usual bath towel and huck towel. When guests have to use their own and pack them wet they feel something is lacking in the accommodations. Fresh, unopened, small bars of soap are expected. And people will use a cleaning cloth on the basin and bath-tub if you provide one.

"How about a bedside mat to step on in getting out of bed so the bare feet do not touch the floor? Other little things sometimes omitted are waste paper baskets, ash trays, a drinking glass, a small bedside table, a well-lighted shaving mirror in the bath-room.

"If there is not a closet in every bed-room, a costumer or standing rack with 4 strong clothes hooks screwed at the top will take care of the clothes the guest removed at night. Four to 6 garment hangers per person should be provided.

"Speaking of keeping clothes in nice condition, women appreciate facilities for pressing their travel wear and will often pay for the privilege of using an iron.

"When people stop at country homes for meals, they look for real farm products. They want cream, milk, delicious butter, the freshest of eggs, fresh fruits and vegetables, and good home cooking. In many cases this is the main reason for stopping at a tourist home. The whole question of meals is a big subject in itself. No one who is not very sure of her ability as a cook should undertake to serve food. If you do attempt it, serve hot foods hot, and cold foods cold.

"I'd like to put in a word about over-talkative managers of tourist homes. Remember about the rest you are selling. Conversation about family affairs or troubles or neighborhood gossip is quite unnecessary.

"On the other hand, I've been impressed by one comment that has been made several times in certain States. That is lack of cordiality or gracious welcome. It's hard to understand how anyone, who expects to profit by taking another person's money, can act as if she were actually conferring a favor by admitting the strangers. A courteous air of hospitality will go far toward creating a good impression. Don't forget that you have competitors in this business, both down the road and behind some of the cars whose occupants might pay you for lodging them if your greeting is cordial. Tourists with trailers can be independent, you know!"

Miss Hall adds that the extension service in many States will be glad to help those who are planning to open their homes to tourists.

